

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05  
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02  
SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 ACDA-12 OMB-01 TRSE-00 AID-05  
ARA-10 /122 W

-----061215 111101Z /10

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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6565  
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA  
AMEMBASSY BERLIN  
AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
AMEMBASSY SANA  
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI  
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 07893

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PBOR MOPS PEPR SU ET LY UR  
SUBJECT: COMMENTS BY ELF/PLF LEADER

SUMMARY. DURING DISCUSSION WITH EMBOFF MARCH 8, TAHA MUHAMMAD NUR, FOREIGN RELATIONS DIRECTOR FOR ERITREAN LIBERATION FRONT/POPULAR LIBERATION FORCES (ELF/PLF), DESCRIBED WHAT ELF/PLF BELIEVES TO BE SHIFT IN LIBYAN POSITION ON ERITREAN INSURGENCY, PREDICTED THAT ERITREAN GUERRILLAS WOULD SOON SPLIT INTO ONE MARXIST AND ONE NON-MARXIST GROUP, AND COMMENTED ON SOVIET EFFORTS TO MEDIATE BETWEEN EPMG AND SEPARATE ERITREAN GROUPS. END SUMMARY.

1. TAHA STATED THAT, DURING HIS DECEMBER 1977 VISIT TO  
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TRIPOLI WITH ELF/PLF CHIEF SALAH OSMAN SABBE, QADHAFI HAD COMMENTED TO ERITREANS THAT LIBYA BECOMING OVER-IDENTIFIED WITH SOVIET POLICIES IN AFRICA AND THAT THERE CONSIDERABLE DISCONTENT IN LIBYA THAT GOVERNMENT ASSISTING MARXIST ETHIOPIANS AGAINST MUSLIM SOMALIS AND ERITREANS. QADHAFI PROMISED ELF/PLF TO RELEASE SMALL ARMS SHIPMENT WHICH HAD BEEN HELD UP IN LIBYA AND

FUTURE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO ELF/PLF. TAHA STATED THAT ELF/PLF REP IN TRIPOLI HAS CONTINUED TO RECEIVE EXCELLENT COOPERATION FROM LIBYANS IN WAKE OF SABBE VISIT.

2. ACCORDING TO ELF/PLF INFO FROM OFFICE IN TRIPOLI, VISIT OF SOMALI PRES SIAD TO TRIPOLI IN LATE FEBRUARY ALSO FALLS WITHIN FRAMEWORK OF LIBYAN REASSESSMENT OF POLICY IN HORN OF AFRICA. TAHA DID NOT CLAIM THAT QADHAFI WAS ENDORSING SOMALI OCCUPATION OF OGADEN, BUT RATHER OPINED THAT LIBYANS WERE NOT HAPPY OVER PROSPECT THAT PRO-SOVIET PUPPET REGIME MIGHT SUCCEED SIAD IN EVENT OF DEBACLE IN OGADEN. TALKS WITH SIAD, AS WITH ELF/PLF, CENTERED ON WAYS TO PROMOTE STRONG ISLAMIC REGIMES IN HORN AREA. ELF/PLF DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT QADHAFI PLEASSED WITH FACT THAT ETHIOPIA BECOMING A SOVIET/CUBAN SATELLITE.

3. CONCERNING ERITREAN UNITY, TAHA REMARKED THAT OCTOBER 1977 UNITY AGREEMENT BETWEEN ELF AND EPLF IN FACT COULD MORE APTLY BE DESCRIBED AS MERGER OF SECRET MARXIST PARTIES WITHIN EACH ORGANIZATION: POPULAR PARTY WITHIN EPLF, OF WHICH ISAIAS AFEWORK LEADER, AND LABOR PARTY OF ELF, OF WHICH IBRAHIM TOTIL PROMINENT MEMBER. ACCORDING TO ELF/PLF, THERE WIDE GAP BETWEEN REGULAR GUERRILLAS IN FIELD IN ERITREA AND POLITICAL IDEOLOGUES WHO HAMMERED OUT AGREEMENT IN KHARTOUM. ERITREAN PEASANTS, WHO ACCORDING TO TAHA ARE MOSTLY SMALLHOLDERS, DO  
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NOT LIKE COLLECTIVIZATION THEY SEE IN MARXIST POLICIES OF EPMG ELSEWHERE IN ETHIOPIA AND THUS ARE BECOMING MORE DISENCHANTED WITH MARXIST IDEOLOGUES WITHIN ERITREAN MOVEMENT. FOR EXAMPLE, THERE GROUP STRONGLY OPPOSED TO ISAIAS WITHIN EPLF, APPROXIMATELY 1,500 STRONG, NICKNAMED "THE BATS", WHO MANAGED TO SEIZE LION'S SHARE OF ARMS CAPTURED IN KEREN AND TO SHIP WEAPONS SOUTH OF ASMARA, AWAY FROM ISAIAS' CONTROL. IN ADDITION, ELF, UNDER WEAK LEADERSHIP OF AHMAD NASIR, IS CRUMBLING AND LOSING MEMBERS. ACCORDING TO ELF/PLF STATISTICS, ELF CURRENTLY STILL MAJOR GUERRILLA GROUPING WITH 15,000 FIGHTERS; NEXT COMES EPLF WITH 12-14,000; LAST ELF/PLF WITH SOME 8,000, BUT GROWING FAST. TAHA OPINED THAT, WITHIN NOT-TOO-DISTANT FUTURE, ERITREAN MOVEMENT WOULD PROBABLY REALIGN ITSELF INTO MARXIST AND NATIONALIST GROUPS. SHOULD MARXISTS DEPART ELF SOON, ELF/PLF WOULD DISSOLVE ITSELF INTO REVAMPED ELF, HOPING TO DRAW NON-MARXIST ELEMENTS AWAY FROM EPLF.

4. TAHA NOTED THAT, SINCE FALL OF 1977, SOVIETS HAVE ATTEMPTED TO MEDIATE BETWEEN ERITREAN GROUPS AND EPMG, USING GDR AS SURROGATE AND BERLIN AS LOCALE FOR DISCUS-

SIONS. ERITREANS AWARE THAT SOVIETS USING DIVIDE-AND-RULE TACTICS, AS THREE MAIN GROUPS INVITED SEPARATELY TO BERLIN: ELF IN SEPTEMBER, ELF/PLF IN LATE OCTOBER, AND EPLF IN EARLY FEBRUARY 1978. SOVIET PROPOSAL, RELAYED BY GDR, WAS ALWAYS SAME: IF ERITREAN GROUPS WOULD CONSENT TO CEDE TO ETHIOPIA A RED SEA STRIP CONTAINING PORT OF ASAB, USSR WOULD USE INFLUENCE WITH EPMG TO OBTAIN BEST POSSIBLE SETTLEMENT FOR ERITREA. GDR NEGOTIATORS TALKED VAGUELY ABOUT "BEST SETTLEMENT" AND TAHA WAS NOT SURE WHETHER THEY HINTING AT TRULY INDEPENDENT ERITREA ALLIED WITH ETHIOPIA, OR CONFEDERAL STATUS WITH GUARANTEES OF LOCAL AUTONOMY. ALL THREE GROUPS TURNED DOWN SOVIET SUGGESTION ON ASAB ON GROUNDS THAT TRUNCATING ERITREA WOULD NEVER BE ACCEPTABLE TO GUERRILLAS IN FIELD. EILTS  
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## Message Attributes

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**Enclosure:** n/a  
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**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
20 Mar 2014  
**Markings:** Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014